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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [AF](#) [PK](#) [RS](#)  
SUBJECT: RUSSIA SUPPORTS STRONG MEASURES AGAINST PAKISTANI  
EXTREMISTS

Classified By: Acting Political Counselor Margaret Hawthorne for reason  
s 1.4 (b/d).

11. (C) MFA Pakistan Desk Chief Andrey Starkov told us on June 25 that Russia continued to advocate the use of strong measures against terrorists in Pakistan, and was concerned by the new government's "weak" approach to securing the tribal regions on the border with Afghanistan. Starkov did not believe the Gilani government had a genuine plan to address the problem, and complained that making "gentlemen's agreements" with extremists ran counter to Pakistan's security interests. He questioned Pakistan's reliance on the Frontier Corps, saying that they were insufficient to face Taliban and other insurgents that must be fought by the regular Army.

12. (C) Starkov considered PM Gilani's reaction to the recent U.S. airstrike that killed Pakistani troops overly "harsh," and commented that such incidents were inevitable if Pakistan failed to take sufficient action against Taliban who used the country as a safe haven to launch attacks in Afghanistan. Starkov reiterated that whether in Pakistan or Afghanistan, the GOR supported U.S. counterterrorism efforts.

13. (C) Starkov thought the future of Gilani's coalition government was unpredictable - it faced internal problems and had become too focused on the possibility of removing President Musharraf. He said Army Chief of Staff General Kayani was handling the current situation shrewdly by "sitting on the fence" regarding Musharraf's future, and predicted that Musharraf would "struggle to the end" to retain his position. Starkov explained that the GOR continued to support Musharraf, who remained Pakistan's best hope for fighting extremists.

14. (C) Starkov said Russia-Pakistan bilateral contacts remained limited. Their counter-terrorism working group was expected to hold its fourth annual meeting by the end of 2008, while ministerial level consultations, which were last held in Moscow in June 2006, might next take place in Islamabad in 2009.

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